

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANJUL 00555 190855Z

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 SS-20 NSC-07 SP-03 CIAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BANJUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2061

INFO AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY LONDON

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PGOV PINT GA

SUBJ: VP AND MIN OF LANDS ANDREW CAMARA TO BECOME MUSLIM

REF: STATE 201876

1. ON DELIVERING PRESIDENT FORD'S REPLY TO ACTING PRAY DENT CAMARA'S CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE ON THE OCCASION OF HIS ACCESSION TO THE PRESIDENCY, I ASKED CAMARA ABOUT THE RUMORS CIRCULATING THAT HE PLANNED TO BECOME A MUSLIM.

2. IN HIS USUAL FRANK, OPEN MANNER HE CONFIRMED THAT HE PLANNED TO BECOME A MUSLIM AND TO ADOPT HASSAN AS HIS GIVEN NAME.

3. I ASKED IF THIS DECISION WAS IN ANY WAY RELATED TO HIS POLITICAL AMBITIONS. HE LAUGHED AND SAID, "NO, ACTUALLY IT IS POLITICALLY ADVANTAGEOUS TO BE THE ONLY CHRISTIAN IN THE CABINET."

4. HE THEN WENT ON TO STATE THAT MOST GAMBIAN CHRISTIANS WERE AKU/CREOLES, WHICH HE WAS NOT. ALL HIS FAMILY WERE AND HAVE ALWAYS BEEN MUSLIMS. HE HAD BEEN TROUBLED, HE SAID, IN ATTENDING CHRISTIAN FUNERALS TO SEE HOW FEW MOURNERS THERE WERE AND IMPLIED

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PAGE 02 BANJUL 00555 190855Z

THAT HE DID NOT WANT THAT TO HAPPEN TO HIM, THIS WAS A PERSONAL

DECISION AND A FAMILY MATTER AND IN NO WAY POLITICAL.

5. HE PLANS TO MAKE A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT SOON AFTER
PRESIDENT JAWARA'S RETURN (SEPT 25) FROM HIS HOLIDAY IN SWITZER-
LAND.

6. I THANKED THE ACTING PRESIDENT FOR HIS FRANK STATEMENT
AND REGRETTED THAT I MIGHT NOT BE ABLE IN FUTURE TO INVITE HIM
AROUND FOR A DRINK. HE LAUGHED AGAIN AND SAID, "OH, I'M NOT
GOING TO BE ALL THAT ORTHODOX A MUSLIM."

7. COMMENT:DESPITE THE PERSONAL ASPECTS OF THE VICE PRESI-
DENT'S DECISION, IT CAN HARDLY HARM HIS POLITICAL FUTURE.
ALREADY WIDELY POPULAR THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, CAMARA COULD
ALSO BE THINKING OF THE NEXT ELECTIONS DUE NOT LATER THAN
MID 1976.
MCFARLAND

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